



e3p

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

The Avenue, Didsbury Point

Reference:80-655-R1-2

Date: January 2022



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL REPORT

THIS REPORT CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL BADGER INFORMATION

The Avenue
Didsbury Point

Prepared for:
Southway Housing Trust

Report Ref: 80-655-R1-2
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Land east of The Avenue, Manchester, M20 2ED
Coordinates	E 383548, N 392584
Site Area	Approximately 0.3 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site comprised an area of disused land colonised by poor semi-improved grassland, scrub, ruderal habitats, scattered trees and a treeline. Historically the site comprised a hardstanding car park with commercial units. Adjacent to the east of the site is residential housing and apartment complexes, the properties to the north and west of the site are predominantly commercial. Didsbury High School is located immediately south of the site.
Designated Sites	The site is located within the impact risk zone of Rochdale Canal Site of Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). No impacts on Rochdale Canal SAC, SSSI are anticipated as a result of development, based on the distance between the site and the designated site, and the small scale of the development.
Survey Results	The site was found to comprise a building, storage containers, refuse piles, hardstanding, ephemeral/short perennial, poor semi-improved grassland, a treeline, scattered trees, dense scrub, scattered scrub and tall ruderal. The site was found to have the following potential ecological constraints: ✿ B1 had Low bat roosting potential. ✿ Potential foraging opportunities for bats along the TL1, scattered trees and dense scrub. ✿ Opportunities for nesting birds within the treeline, scattered trees and dense scrub. ✿ Presence of badger on site and within the local area. ✿ Potential presence of hedgehogs within the dense scrub and scattered scrub, and around the base of the scattered trees and trees within the treeline. ✿ Opportunities for common amphibians within the poor semi-improved grassland, scattered scrub, dense scrub and tall ruderal. ✿ Potential presence of reptiles. ✿ Opportunities for invertebrates. ✿ Invasive plant species (field horsetail) present on-site.



Conclusions

The following further surveys are recommended:

- ✿ At least one Nocturnal Bat Survey required on B1.
- ✿ Monitoring of the on-site outlier badger sett for a period of 21 days using soft blocking techniques and camera traps.

The following mitigation is recommended:

- ✿ Precautionary Working Methods for badger.
- ✿ Precautionary Working Methods for reptiles.
- ✿ Vegetation should be retained where possible. If any vegetation requires removal, it should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hrs before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located, then a stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.
- ✿ If the dense scrub, scattered scrub, treeline and scattered trees are to be impacted by the works, they should be checked for common amphibians and hedgehogs prior to removal. Any debris piles are to be demolished under ecological supervision. Tree roots are to be checked for common amphibians and hedgehogs. Dense scrub is to be cut to 50 cm and checked for common amphibians and hedgehogs. It is recommended that vegetation clearance takes place outside December - March to avoid impacting hibernating hedgehogs.
- ✿ Eradication of invasive species prior to works commencing on-site.
- ✿ The lighting design and best practice pollution measures should ensure sensitive habitats including the treelines within the site, and broadleaved woodland 100 m south of the site are maintained as dark areas and protected during and post construction.
- ✿ Retention of TL1 and associated scrub habitats to retain the site's value for invertebrates.

A gain in biodiversity will likely be required on-site. If this cannot be achieved on-site, a conservation offset payment or off-site compensation may be required.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P were commissioned by Southway Housing Trust to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at The Avenue, Didsbury Point, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

This report has been produced by Lowri Thomas BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist at E3P. Lowri has experience undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, protected species surveys and ecological mitigation for a wide variety of projects across the UK.

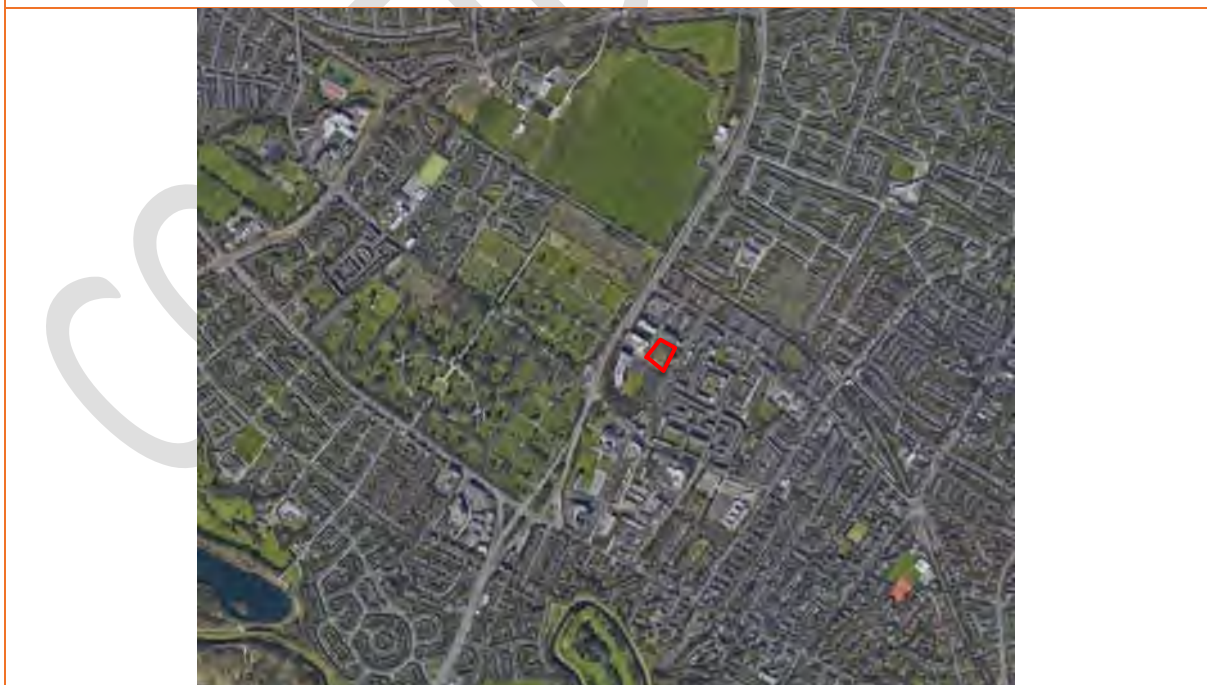
1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals include the construction of an apartment complex with associated infrastructure and amenity areas.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in the residential and commercial area of West Didsbury. The site is accessed via The Avenue, which defines the east of the site boundary. Didsbury High School and associated football pitch and car park is located south of the site. Manchester Southern Cemetery is located approximately 170 m west of the site at its closest point, while Withington tram line is situated approximately 250 m north-east of the site. The River Mersey is located 780 m south of the site, beyond an area of residential housing. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are as follows:

-  Identify the major habitats present.
-  Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
-  Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal comprises a desk study and site walkover. This survey has been completed as a baseline assessment of the site, and as such please see the end of the report for further surveys and mitigation proposed.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESKTOP STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ✿ MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites, consulted in November 2021.
- ✿ Aerial mapping and ordinance survey maps.
- ✿ Local data records, including The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) – the biodiversity information system for Greater Manchester, received on 30th November 2021.

A 1 km search area was utilised for the data search, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site, due to the size of the site and the surrounding habitat which includes residential and commercial units.

The data search included a request for details of protected and notable species of flora and fauna within 1 km of the central grid reference of the site. In addition, a request was made for any non-statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site boundary.

Please note that a lack of up-to-date records does not confirm absence of a species from the area. Lack of records may simply be a result of a lack of protected species surveys being undertaken within the local area.

2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITATS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development site was undertaken by Lowri Thomas on 23rd November 2021. The weather was cold and overcast.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey, 2010. The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017).

A vegetation and habitat plan has been produced for the proposed development site and the immediate surrounding area (please refer to Appendix I). The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase I Habitat Survey Methodology (JNCC, 2010).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including but not limited to, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).



2.3. FAUNA

A thorough search of the site for signs of protected species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. These searches considered the following:

- ✿ Suitability of any ponds to support notable amphibians, and the suitability of the site's terrestrial habitats to support amphibians.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support reptiles by way of habitat structure and refuge piles, as well as links to the wider landscape.
- ✿ Signs of badgers, by way of setts, mammal paths, foraging signs or latrines to indicate usage of the site by the species.
- ✿ Search of any watercourses for signs or suitability for water vole and otter by way of burrows, resting places, holts and foraging signs.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable bird species.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable invertebrates.
- ✿ Search of the site for any invasive species.

2.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by Lowri Thomas on 23rd November 2021. Lowri holds a valid Natural England Class 1 Survey Licence (2021-55376-CLS-CLS).

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the buildings and trees, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition (Collins, 2016).

The buildings and trees were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2016).



TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF BUILDINGS AND TREES

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NEGLECTIBLE	A building or tree with no roosting features present or of an age/species that would not support roosting bats.
LOW	A building or tree with one or more potential roost site. However, the potential roost sites do not provide suitability for large numbers of bats (i.e. for maternity or hibernation) and would only be used on an occasional basis.
MODERATE	A building or tree with one or more potential roosting feature which could support bats but is of a suitability meaning that it would be unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
HIGH	A building or tree with several potential roosting features which could support large number of bats on a regular basis and for longer periods of time. The tree or structure would have suitability to support maternity or hibernation roosts.

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.

2.5. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal does not constitute a full botanical survey. Instead, key species are identified to give a representative description of each habitat type.

This survey was undertaken in November, which is an appropriate time of year to undertake ecological surveys. However, due to vegetation die back and lack of flowering, it is possible that some species of flora may have been missed or misidentified. It is possible that some invasive/non-native species could have been missed during the survey. Due to the habitats present on-site, this is not considered to be a major constraint.

A survey within 30 m of the site for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) was unable to be carried out as residential units were located east of the site, with commercial units located north and west, and Didsbury High School located south.

During the Preliminary Roost Assessment of B1, internal access could not be gained.

These constraints have been taken into consideration during the assessment.



3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. SITE CONTEXT

The site included a small electrical substation (B1) with an area of hardstanding, grassland and scrub habitats defined by scattered trees and a treeline. The scattered trees, scrub habitats and treeline are anticipated to provide nesting habitat for common bird species. These habitat features may also offer refuge for terrestrial mammals such as European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and badger.

Residential and commercial units are located immediately east and west of the site, and approximately 35 m north-east of the site, beyond The Boulevard. The developed nature of the surrounding habitat is anticipated to offer little opportunities for local wildlife.

A broadleaved woodland copse is located approximately 100 m south of the site, associated with The Wood School. Additional areas of broadleaved woodland are present within Manchester Southern Cemetery, situated approximately 170 m west of the site. The broadleaved woodland in the surrounding area is anticipated to provide resources for terrestrial mammals as well as potential roosting and nesting opportunities for bats and birds. Beyond the A5103, approximately 230 m north-west of the site is an allotment garden. An additional allotment garden, Albermarle Allotment, is located approximately 315 m north-east of the site. The mosaic of habitats at the allotments are expected to support a diverse range of fauna including reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, bats and terrestrial mammals.

The River Mersey is situated approximately 780 m south of the site, beyond an area of residential housing. The River Mersey is likely to provide foraging resources and refuge for species that rely on aquatic habitats, such as waterfowl and otter (*Lutra lutra*). Furthermore, the watercourse is anticipated to act as an essential wildlife corridor, providing connectivity to high-value habitat including Chorlton Water Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located approximately 1.2 km south-west of the site. Chorlton Water Park LNR comprises a large waterbody surrounded by broadleaved woodland, and is nationally important for wildfowl. However, anthropogenic barriers, including residential and commercial units are located between the site and these features, which may act as a dispersal barrier to the site for some species.

No waterbodies were identified within the site or in 250 m of the site boundary.

3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the impact risk zone of Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located approximately 10 km north-east of the site. Rochdale Canal is designated as an SAC as it hosts the Annex II species floating water-plantain (*Luronium natans*). Rochdale Canal is designated as a SSSI as it contains important habitats for submerged aquatic plants and emergent vegetation, including extensive colonies of the nationally scarce SAC species floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*). The site also supports a diverse assemblage of aquatic flora, notably its assemblage of pondweeds, (*Potamogeton spp*); the nine species of which found in the canal represent a balanced community which reflects the quality of water

No Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are located within the 1 km search area.



3.3. HABITATS

The main habitats encountered during the survey are described in the following subsections. Please refer to Appendix I Drawing 80-655-001 for the Phase 1 Habitat Plan.

3.3.1. BUILDINGS, WALLS AND STORAGE CONTAINERS

Within the north-west of the site was a small single-story electrical substation (B1), formed of concrete breeze block walls, a wooden barge board, wooden doors and a flat roof comprised of roofing felt. Four storage containers, and a trailer were located within the south-west and south-east of the site.

PLATE 1 SHOWING B1



PLATE 2 SHOWING STORAGE CONTAINERS



A red brick wall (W1) defined the north-east of the site boundary, which was approximately 2 m in height and approximately 15 m in length.



PLATE 3 SHOWING WALL



3.3.2. **HARDSTANDING**

A hardstanding access road was located within the south-west of the site, with associated hardstanding footpaths. The hardstanding was colonised in areas by Canadian fleabane (*Erigeron canadensis*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.) and broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*).

PLATE 4 SHOWING HARDSTANDING CARPARK



3.3.3. POOR SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND

The north of the site included an area of poor semi-improved grassland, with a small embankment comprising poor semi-improved grassland located in the centre of the site. The poor semi-improved grassland comprised tussocks, thought to have been formed due to previous groundworks on the site. Furthermore, it was evident that topsoil and vegetation had been recently added to cover depressions within the grassland.

The flora composition included ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), vetch species (*Vicia sp.*), bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), dandelion, Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), timothy grass (*Phleum pratense*), perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), broadleaved dock, pedunculate oak sapling (*Quercus robur*), silver birch saplings (*Betula pendula*), goat willow saplings (*Salix caprea*), willow species saplings (*Salix sp.*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), ragwort, sedge species (*Carex sp.*), willow leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster salicifolius*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*), greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) common reed (*Phragmites australis*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*).

PLATE 5 SHOWING POOR SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND



3.3.4. EPHEMERAL/SHORT PERENNIAL

Ephemeral/short perennial was located within the centre of the site, along the southern boundary and within the north-west of the site, associated with the hardstanding, treelines, bare ground and poor semi-improved grassland. Species within the ephemeral/short perennial included red clover, birds-foot trefoil, dandelion, butterfly bush, soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), ragwort, greater plantain, ribwort plantain, spear thistle, herb robert, rosebay willowherb and perennial rye-grass.



PLATE 6 SHOWING EPHEMERAL/SHORT PERENNIAL



3.3.5. **TALL RUDERAL**

Tall ruderal was located along the southern extent of the raised embankment. The flora included rosebay willowherb, common nettle, broadleaved dock and bramble. Areas of building refuse were located adjacent to the habitat.

PLATE 7 SHOWING TALL RUDERAL



3.3.6. DENSE SCRUB

Dense scrub was situated along the north boundary of the site, within the south-east corner and adjacent to TL1. The dense scrub comprised goat willow saplings, willow species saplings, silver birch saplings, pedunculate oak saplings, butterfly bush, bramble, common nettle, common ivy (*Hedera helix*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*) and Scot's pine saplings (*Pinus sylvestris*). Areas of refuse were associated with the dense scrub.

PLATE 8 SHOWING DENSE SCRUB



3.3.7. SCATTERED SCRUB

The understory of the treeline comprised scattered scrub. Species within this area included bramble, common ivy, broadleaved heliborne (*Epipactis helleborine*), common nettle, dog rose, goat willow saplings, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), broadleaved dock, willow species saplings and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*).

PLATE 9 SHOWING SCATTERED SCRUB



3.3.8. BARE GROUND

Small patches of bare ground were distributed in the site. It was evident that badger had been utilising the bare ground for foraging purposes as footprints and snuffle holes were identified.

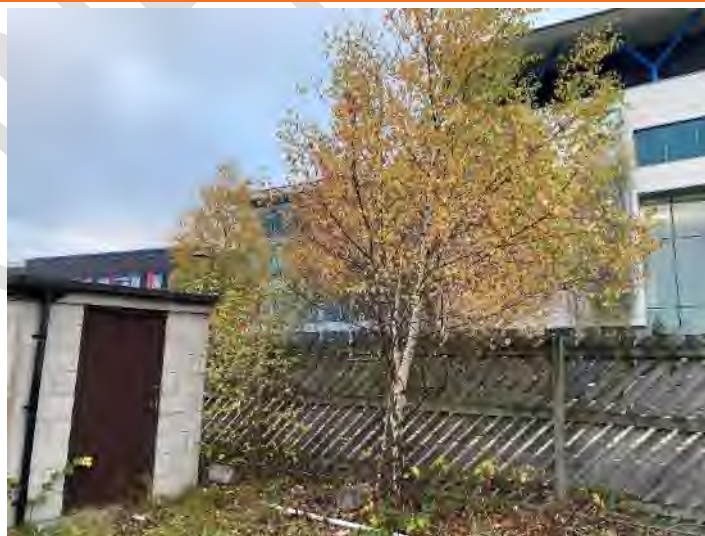
PLATE 10 SHOWING BARE GROUND



3.3.9. SCATTERED TREES

Three scattered trees were situated within the site boundary, adjacent to B1 and within the north-east of the site. Species included goat willow and silver birch.

PLATE 11 SHOWING TL1



3.3.10. TREELINES

A treeline (TL1) defined the eastern site boundary. Species within TL1 included Scot's pine, goat willow and willow species.

PLATE 12 SHOWING TL1



3.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

3.4.1. SPECIES DISCOUNTED FROM ASSESSMENT

White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) has been discounted from assessment as no suitable aquatic habitats were located on-site or within proximity to the site.

Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) mainly occur in southern counties, especially in Devon, Somerset, Sussex and Kent. There are few recorded localities north of the Midlands, though they are present in parts of the Lake District and in scattered Welsh localities (Matthews et al, 2018). The species are not generally known to be present in West Didsbury as such, the species are reasonably discounted from assessment.

3.4.2. AMPHIBIANS

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) within the 1 km search area. Consultation with MAGIC did not identify any great crested newt European Protected Species Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 6.5 km north-west of the site, effective from 2010 to 2011 for the destruction of a great crested newt resting place.

Great crested newts' upper dispersal limit is generally considered to be up to 250 m from a waterbody (though occurrence of greater distances does exist where habitat connectivity is of high quality) (English Nature, 2001). As such, the presence of great crested newts on-site is reasonably discounted as no waterbodies were located on-site or within 250 m of the site. The closest waterbody was situated approximately 965 m south-west of the site, beyond an area of residential housing. Considering the distance between the site and the waterbody and as dispersal barriers are situated between the site and the waterbody great crested newts are discounted from further assessment.

Consultation with GMEU identified did not identify any records of common amphibians within the 1 km search area. Amphibians require shelter from excessive heat, dryness and predation, with sufficient foraging areas and access to prey species (ARC, 2019). The site was found to have value for common amphibians within the treeline, dense scrub, tall ruderal and poor semi-improved grassland. These habitats are anticipated to offer suitable cover and refuge for the species.

3.4.3. BATS

Numerous records of bats were located within 1 km of the site boundary during the data search. Records included brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus sp.*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and unidentified bat species.

The majority of records were associated with Albermarle Allotment located approximately 315 m north-east of the site. Records of common pipistrelle were located adjacent to the south of the site within Didsbury High school grounds, while a cluster of noctule records were situated approximately 100 m south of the site associated with the broadleaved woodland.

A number of bat roosts were identified within the 1 km search area including brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and unidentified bat species. The closest of which was a common pipistrelle roost comprising 2-4 individuals, associated with a residential property on Clearwater Drive 75 m south-east of the site.

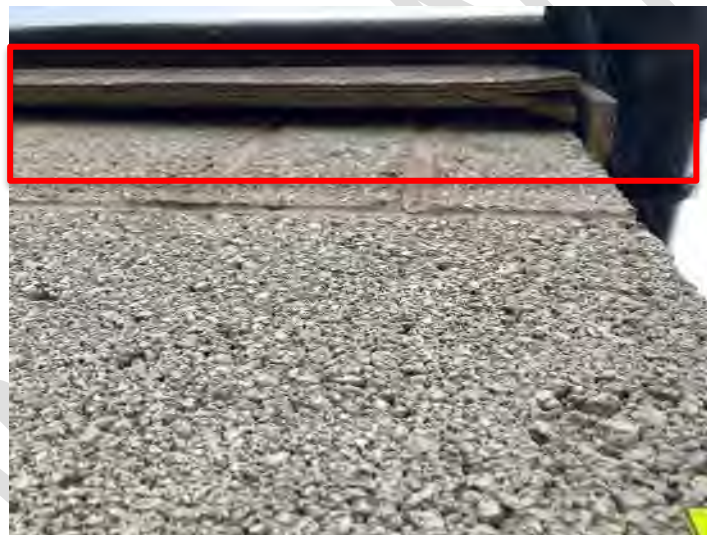


Consultation with MAGIC Mapping identified the presence of three Natural England Bat Mitigation Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence is located approximately 390 m south-east of the site, active between 2015 and 2020 for the damage and destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost. The second licence is located approximately 905 m south-east of the site, effective between 2011 and 2013 for the damage and destruction of a common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle maternity roost and non-breeding roost. The third licence is situated approximately 910 m south-east of the site, effective in 2016 for the damage and destruction of a soprano pipistrelle maternity roost and non-breeding roost.

During the site survey, an inspection of trees and the on-site building was undertaken as per guidance set out in Collins (2016), to assess the features for suitability for roosting bats. All on-site trees were found to have Negligible bat roosting potential, as no Potential Roosting Features were identified.

B1, a small electrical substation, comprised breeze block walls, a wooden barge board, wooden doors and a flat roof comprising roofing felt. The breeze blocks were well sealed on all aspects with no obvious crevices that could support roosting bats. On the south-east and western aspect of the building, the wooden barge board was lifted in areas, providing roosting for opportunistic crevice dwelling bat species, on an occasional basis. As such B1 was determined to have **Low** bat roosting potential.

PLATE 12 SHOWING LIFTED WOODEN BARGE BOARD

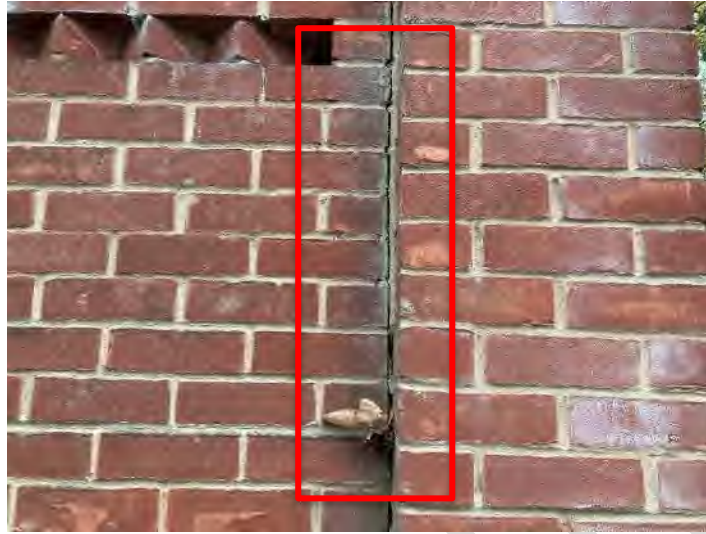


Four storage containers were located within the site, they were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats. The corrugated metal was well sealed on all aspects providing no roosting opportunities for bats. As such the storage containers were determined to have **Negligible** bat roosting potential.

A red brick wall (W1) defined the north-east of the site boundary. The wall was generally in good condition with only small areas of cracked mortar which were determined to be too superficial to support roosting bats. As such W1 was determined to have **Negligible** bat roosting potential.



PLATE 13 SHOWING SUPERFICIAL CRACK IN MORTAR



The dense scrub, scattered trees and TL1 within the site are anticipated to offer foraging resources for local bat species by attracting a range of invertebrate prey.

TL1 provides connectivity to broadleaved woodland (Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat) located 100 m south of the site. However, TL1 is not anticipated to act as an important commuting feature for bats as it is not well connected to habitat located north of the site.

The broadleaved woodland is anticipated to offer higher value habitat for bats in comparison to the site, as the broadleaved woodland is expected to attract a greater diversity and density of invertebrate prey. Furthermore, the broadleaved woodland may offer potential roosting opportunities within the trees.

Additional features in the wider landscape including Southern Cemetery located 170 m west, allotment gardens located 230 m north-west and 315 m north-east and the River Mersey located 780 m south are expected to offer invaluable resources for local bat species. It is anticipated that bats will utilise these areas more frequently when compared to the site.

Overall the site may support low numbers of roosting bats in B1. Additionally TL1, the scattered trees and dense scrub are likely to have foraging value for bats. However, it is anticipated local bat species will utilise the higher value habitat within the wider landscape.

3.4.4. BADGERS

GMEU identified numerous records of badger within the 1 km data search. The closest record was a badger sett comprising three entrance holes, situated approximately 115 m south-west of the site associated with broadleaved woodland adjacent to Didsbury High School. During the survey badger prints and numerous snuffle holes were identified within the site. A single outlier sett was located on the southern aspect of the poor semi-improved grassland embankment (grid reference: SJ 83548 92565). At the time of the survey, it was evident that the sett was active due to the presence of a large fresh spoil pile at the entrance. A badger sett plan is detailed in Appendix II.



PLATE 13 SHOWING ACTIVE BADGER SETT



The site offers foraging resources for the species, as well as sett building opportunities for badger along the poor semi-improved grassland embankment, within the understory of the treeline and within the dense scrub. It is anticipated that badger are utilising the TL1 to the east of the site as a commuting feature, as it provides habitat links to the broadleaved woodland located 100 m south of the site. The broadleaved woodland is anticipated to offer a range of resources for the species, including sett building opportunities and foraging opportunities. Taking this in to consideration, as well as the data records, the broadleaved woodland is expected to comprise additional badger setts.

3.4.5. OTTER AND WATER VOLE

No records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) or water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) were identified within the 1 km search area. No aquatic habitats were identified on-site during the survey.

The closest aquatic habitat, the River Mersey, is located 780 m south of the site. This watercourse may offer suitable aquatic habitat for otter and water vole. However due to the distance between the site and the watercourse these species are considered absent from the site.

3.4.6. OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

Numerous records of European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) were located within 1 km of the site boundary. A record was noted within the south-east corner of the site. The dense scrub, and the understory of TL1, which includes scattered scrub, is anticipated to offer shelter for the species. The dense scrub may also offer potential hibernating opportunities.

The surrounding landscape including the residential housing and commercial units are anticipated to offer few opportunities for the species. However, the broadleaved woodland located 100 m south of the site is expected to provide suitable habitat for hedgehog. TL1 provides connectivity from the broadleaved woodland to the site.



3.4.7. NESTING BIRDS

Consultation with GMEU identified numerous records of notable birds within the search area, including bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). During the site walkover, black bird (*Turdus merula*) and house sparrow were identified utilising TL1 and the scattered trees.

The habitats within the site including the dense scrub, scattered trees and treeline are common within the local area. These habitats are anticipated to support common bird species. Notable birds identified in the data search that may utilise the site include starling, bullfinch, linnet, dunnoek and song thrush.

The site was determined to have negligible value for ground-nesting birds. Ground nesting grassland birds thrive on large, open grasslands habitats to nest and reproduce. Scattered trees and a TL1 were noted along the site boundary. Due to the small size of the site, and as it was enclosed by treelines and scattered trees ground-nesting birds are not anticipated to utilise the site.

3.4.8. REPTILES

No recent records of reptiles were identified within the 1 km search area. A single historic record of grass snake, dated 1993, was located approximately 440 m north-east of the site associated with residential housing along Albemarle Avenue.

The poor semi-improved grassland tussocks, refuse piles, scrub habitats and treeline are expected to provide suitable cover for reptile species such as slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). Furthermore, the hardstanding offers basking opportunities. The broadleaved woodland located 100 m south of the site is likely to form valuable shelter for the species, and TL1 provides links from this habitat to the site.

As such the site and broadleaved woodland to the south has value for reptiles, however, when taking into considering the small scale of the site and lack of recent records it is not anticipated to support a significant population of reptiles.

3.4.9. INVERTEBRATES

The data search identified four records of Section 41 species cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*). The closest record was located approximately 130 m south-west of the site, associated with broadleaved woodland. Cinnabar moth frequents open grassy habitats including waste ground, railway banks, gardens and woodland rides. However, they usually inhabit well-drained rabbit-grazed grassland, mature sand-dunes and heathland (Butterfly Conservation, 2021). As such the species may utilise the site.

The site is anticipated to support common invertebrates within the poor semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, scrub habitats, scattered trees and TL1.

3.5. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

No records of invasive species were recorded within the 1 km search area. Field Horsetail was located within the south-east of the site and along the western boundary.



4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION

4.1. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Development proposals include the construction of an apartment complex with associated infrastructure and amenity areas.

4.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the impact risk zone of Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located approximately 10 km north-east of the site. Rochdale Canal is designated as a SAC due to the presence of floating water plantain, it is designated as a SSSI as it contains important habitats for submerged aquatic plants and emergent vegetation. Considering the extensive distance between Rochdale Canal SAC, SSSI and the site, and the reason for the canals designation it is not anticipated that the development will have an adverse impact on the Rochdale Canal SAC SSSI and its aquatic and emergent vegetation. Furthermore, consultation with MAGIC Mapping identified that the proposed development does not meet the requirements that would justify further consultation with Natural England for the development to proceed.

4.3. HABITATS

The site comprised habitats that were found to be widespread within the local area; however, they did contain value for wildlife such as bats, birds, badger, common amphibians, invertebrates, reptiles and hedgehog. The hardstanding is of the lowest value for wildlife, with TL1, scrub habitats, grassland and scattered trees comprising the areas of highest value.

4.3.1. TREELINE AND SCATTERED TREES

It is recommended that, where possible, the treeline and scattered trees are retained and protected through development. It is anticipated that some trees may require removal to facilitate development, and where this is needed, new landscape planting will be introduced to mitigate the loss. Any replacement planting should endeavour to be on the same aspect as that to be lost.

It is recommended that the landscape planting comprises native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife. This will include fruiting and flowering species. Species deemed suitable for this development could include berry-bearing native species such as:

- ✿ Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).
- ✿ Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).
- ✿ Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).
- ✿ Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*).
- ✿ Spindle (*Euonymus europaea*).
- ✿ Dog rose.
- ✿ Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).



 Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

All planting should be from a trusted pest-free source and, where possible, be of local provenance.

Any trees within the site or boundary, to be retained, are to be appropriately protected during the construction phase. Temporary protective demarcation fencing will be used to protect the trees. The fencing must extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until the end of development to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.

The fencing will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations*.

4.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

4.4.1. AMPHIBIANS

The site may support common amphibians within the scattered scrub, poor semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal and dense scrub habitats on-site. If these habitats are to be impacted by the development it is recommended that during the clearance phase of works, any common amphibians encountered be moved by hand, away from construction activities to broadleaved woodland located 100 m south of the site.

4.4.2. BREEDING BIRDS

The site was assessed as having value for common bird species within the dense scrub, scattered trees and TL1. If any vegetation requires removal, it should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hours before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located then a stand-off distance will be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable stand off and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

Post-development, landscape planting, as detailed in Section 4.3.1, should be introduced to mitigate the loss of any trees removed to facilitate the development. Bird boxes could also be installed throughout the development to enhance the site's value for the species group.

4.4.3. BATS

The site was found to have value for foraging bats within the scattered trees, dense scrub and TL1 and was also found to have roosting potential within B1.

It is recommended that the proposed Lighting Plan considers the habitats of highest importance. It is recommended that any security lighting during construction is appropriately placed to avoid being directed at any retained habitats on-site habitats such as the scattered trees, dense scrub and TL1, as well as the broadleaved woodland located approximately 100 m south of the site.

To reduce the potential lighting impacts for bats, the following recommendations are advised for the lighting strategy:



- ✿ Lighting should be pre-fixed on any proposed buildings, to ensure impacts on sensitive areas such as dense scrub, scattered trees and TL1, and the woodland to the south of the site are diminished.
- ✿ Warm white tones are preferable to blue toned lights (3000k).
- ✿ LED lights are preferable as they produce minimal UV.
- ✿ To avoid light spill skyward, ensure lights face downward.
- ✿ Make use of vegetation to block light spill into dark areas.

Lighting should follow the protocols outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK” (2018) to minimise disturbance and sky-glow off site.

It is recommended that any planting within the site be of native fruiting/flowering species in order to enhance the site for foraging bats post-completion. A series of bat boxes could be installed throughout the development to enhance the site’s value for the species group.

4.4.4. BADGERS

During the survey an active outlier badger sett was located on the southern aspect of the poor semi-improved grassland embankment. The outlier sett plan is detailed in Appendix II.

A 30 m buffer needs to be maintained from an outlier badger sett. Site development proposals indicate that a 30 m buffer cannot be maintained from the sett on-site, as such it is anticipated that the sett will require closure to facilitate the development. To determine the activity status of the sett it is recommended that the sett is monitored for a period of 21 days using soft blocking methods and camera traps. If the sett is determined inactive after a period of 21 days, it can be closed without a licence via hand digging.

If the sett is determined to be active after the monitoring period a Natural England Badger licence will be required to close the active on-site sett, and this can only be submitted once full planning permission has been obtained and all wildlife conditions have been discharged. Badger licences can only be obtained between July and November (inclusive) each year to avoid potential impact on pregnant females.

A minimum 30 m stand-off distance will be maintained from the on-site sett until the activity status of the sett has been determined.

Badgers are highly mobile and can create new setts in a short period of time. It is recommended that an updated site walkover is undertaken immediately prior to the development is carried out to identify any new badger setts.

The following precautionary working methods will be adhered to during construction phase to ensure that no badgers within the local area are impacted by the proposed development:

- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted to the presence of the species and their working limits and legal responsibilities.
- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted as to identifying potential badger setts, and should be vigilant if they suspect they locate a new sett during works and inform the project ecologist immediately.



- ✿ All excavations will be battened at a 45-degree angle to allow escape should animals become trapped. Alternatively excavations will be covered overnight.
- ✿ All site machinery and materials will be appropriately stored to avoid harm to the species, notably between July and November each year when extra care is needed to avoid potential impacts on pregnant females.

4.4.5. HEDGEHOGS

Hedgehogs may be present within the dense scrub, scattered scrub, and understory of the treeline and scattered trees. These areas should be retained where possible. During the site clearance, the scrub should be cut to 50 cm from ground level and searched immediately prior to clearance to ground level to ensure no sheltering hedgehogs are impacted by the works. It is anticipated that the treeline will be retained in the development. If the scattered trees and treeline require removal their surrounding base should be searched by hand prior to them being felled. It is recommended that vegetation clearance takes place outside December - March to avoid impacting hibernating hedgehogs.

If hedgehogs are located, they should be carefully moved by hand to an area outside of construction workings to a sheltered area such as the broadleaved woodland located 100 m south of the site.

Post-development, a series of hedgehog houses could be installed within the understory of the treeline to enhance the site's value for the species.

4.4.6. REPTILES

The dense scrub, scattered scrub, poor semi-improved grassland, scattered trees, treeline, hardstanding and refuse piles were assessed as having potential for reptiles.

The habitats of suitable value for the species group are to be retained where possible. It is recommended that the following Precautionary Working Methods are to be followed during site clearance of the treelines, scattered trees, poor semi-improved grassland and scrub habitats, and during clearance of refuse piles, to minimise potential impacts on the species:

- ✿ All site contractors are to be inducted as to the potential presence of the species group, their legal responsibilities and working limits, by a suitably qualified experienced ecologist.
- ✿ Any scrub to be removed will be strimmed to a length of approximately 150 mm under the supervision of the ecologist. It will be checked by an ecologist for the presence of reptiles, and once the area is deemed free, the area will be turfed with a toothed bucket.
- ✿ During works the site should be kept tidy of debris and material, and any vegetation within the working areas should be maintained below 50 mm in height to discourage amphibians or reptiles from re-entering these areas.
- ✿ In the unlikely instance a reptile is identified, works should cease and the project ecologist contacted immediately to capture the individual.

4.4.7. INVERTEBRATES

The site was found to have value for common invertebrates. Furthermore, Section 41 species, cinnabar moth, are anticipated to utilise the broadleaved woodland 100 m south of the site, and may utilise TL1. As such it is recommended that TL1 and associated understory is retained during the development.



4.4.8. INVASIVE SPECIES

Field horsetail was also identified during the survey, and it is recommended that this eradicated due to the damage it can cause to areas of hardstanding. Field horsetail is not listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and therefore does not legally require removal.

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5. FURTHER SURVEYS

5.1. BATS

B1 was found to have Low bat roosting potential due to the presence of lifted wooden barge board on the south-east and western aspect, which may provide roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bats on an occasional basis. Development proposals include the demolition of B1 and as such, it is recommended that one Nocturnal Bat Survey is completed on B1 between May to September (inclusive). The survey is to follow the guidance set out in Collins (2016), surveyors are to be positioned at areas of greatest roosting potential and should be completed by suitably qualified ecologists.

Should a bat roost be identified within B1 during the survey, a further two Nocturnal Bat Surveys will be required to inform a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL), which will be required to destroy any identified bat roosts. An EPSL can only be granted once full planning permission has been obtained and all wildlife conditions have been discharged.

Due to the minimal suitability of the building to support roosting bats, to negate the need for further surveys and delays to a planning application, the building could be demolished under a method statement and supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.

5.2. BADGER

During the survey an active outlier badger sett comprising a single entrance was located on the poor semi-improved grassland embankment. To determine the activity status of the on-site sett it is recommended that the sett is monitored for a period of 21 days using soft blocking techniques and camera traps. This will be used to inform a Badger Survey Report and Method Statement. If the sett is determined to be inactive after 21 days it can be closed without a licence.

If the outlier sett is determined to be active a Natural England Badger licence will be required to close the sett, and this can only be submitted once full planning permission has been obtained and all wildlife conditions have been discharged. Badger licences can only be obtained between July and November (inclusive) each year to avoid potential impact on pregnant females.



5.3. TABLE OF FURTHER SURVEYS

Please refer to Table 5.1 for a summary of further surveys required to inform a planning application.

TABLE 5.1 FURTHER SURVEYS RECOMMENDED

SURVEY TYPE	TIMESCALES
NOCTURNAL BAT SURVEY ON B1	May-September (inclusive)
MONITORING OF BADGER SETT	Anytime of the year



6. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The scheme should strive to achieve biodiversity net gain, as per “Biodiversity Net Gain; Good Practice Principles for Development” CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016). Full details of this and a calculation of net gain could be completed after detailed landscape plans have been prepared. The project ecologist should be consulted during the design stage and a draft calculation produced. The following habitat measures will increase the on-site biodiversity:

- ✿ Retaining and enhancing TL1, scattered trees and scrub habitats.
- ✿ Native Hedgerow Planting.
- ✿ Native Scrub Planting.
- ✿ Wildlife Ponds.
- ✿ Broadleaved Trees.

Habitat measures should be provided within areas of open space or designated wildlife zones. A 30-year management plan should be produced to ensure biodiversity is secured on-site.



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END OF REPORT



APPENDIX I

PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN



Key:

- Site boundary
- Treeline
- Wall
- Metal fence
- - - Mound
- Wooden fence
- Field horsetail
- Scattered trees
- Refuse
- Building
- Storage containers
- Tall ruderal
- Dense scrub
- Bare ground
- Scattered scrub
- Ephemeral/short perennial
- Poor semi-improved grassland
- Hardstanding

Notes

Issue 1	Revision 2	Date 21/01/2022	Drawn LT	Authorised CB
Client: Southway Housing			Job No. 80-655	Date 21/01/2022
			Drawing No. 80-655-001	Scale 1:900
Job title: The Avenue, Didsbury Point			Drawing title: Phase 1 Habitat Plan	



APPENDIX II

BADGER SETT PLAN



Key:

- Site boundary
- Footprint
- Snuffle hole
- Badger sett
- 30 m buffer

Notes

Issue 1	Revision 1	Date 25/11/2021	Drawn LT	Authorised CB
Client: Southway Housing			Job No. 80-655	Date 25/11/2021
			Drawing No. 80-655-002	Scale 1:900
Job title: The Avenue, Didsbury Point			Drawing title: Badger Sett Location Plan	

